

STATEMENT ON A POLICE ADVISORY BOARD

By: Alexander Mark

In an atmosphere of calm, free, frank, open discussion, there are no problems that cannot be resolved by men of good will.

We have no desire to antagonize - but have a sincere wish to conciliate.

In this atmosphere, I feel that we can shed some light - rather than generate heat - regarding the recommendations of this Commission and the recommendations of the Police Director and his supporters.

For the record, this Commission - has expressed itself - on several occasions - commending the well-deserved reputation for law enforcement and apprehension - earned by the members of the Police Department of this City.

I quote from my release of March 3, 1963 - (a copy of which I sent to the Director of Police) - quote: "I can see why Police resist having this ---board---. Police work at best is a thankless task in any metropolitan center. Director Dominick Spina is doing an excellent job with an undisciplined department. As chairman of the Newark Human Rights Commission, I congratulate him on his record for the first eight months. He is an alert and efficient leader of men. We shall continue to respect his judgment and his loyalty to his force, even though we shall maintain our right to disagree with him on the efficiency and objectivity of a Police Advisory Board"---unquote.

The right to disagree --Ladies and Gentlemen - is not un-American. Rather, the right of disagreement is an ingredient of law enforcement inherent in our system of government.

It is my intention to shed light - rather than generate heat.

All of you are familiar with the objectives of this Commission - to foster harmonious relationships between groups with various ethnic, religious, racial and national origin backgrounds.

The members of the Police Force and their families compose a fair sized group and with this occupational similarity - have several basic interests - shared by all its members. However, even within this group - we have sub-groups - joined together by rank - by race - by national origin. This is their right to join together where common interests can best be served.

Similarly, in this community, a good sized proportion of our population - 38% by our 1958 Report by Market Planning - are Negroes.

This group also has expressed itself where common interests are involved. One area of expression - concerned itself with attitudes about Police-Minority Group Relationships.

Because of these attitudes, this Commission, on June 26, 1962, forwarded a series of recommendations to the then Mayor-Elect - suggesting that on the attitude of Police-Minority Group interactions, a means be found for improving - quote: "Police-Community Relationships". unquote - and among other items on a proposed agenda for action, requested guidance in Point 4 of a 6 Point Memorandum.

Point 4. "To develop a community-wide program to improve police-community relations".

On July 15, 1962, a similar memorandum was presented to the Mayor. This memorandum included a request for a Police-Community Relations Officer - to quote: "To work with individual police officers, The Police Academy and the Department in promoting better police-community feelings as regards to the treatment of minority groups and to improve the image of the policeman among complaining groups and persons" unquote.

I will not burden you with the additional memoranda on this same subject.

However, - this Commission made its recommendations in all good faith in accordance with the mandates of the Ordinance creating the Commission.

The recommendations of this Commission are intended only to provide a program for progress in the field of intergroup relations.

If the Director of Police and the representatives of the various police organizations have other recommendations - or disagree with the recommendations of this Commission - we respect their right to disagree.

If our purposes are the same - improved community relationships - we do not claim any one way is best - to accomplish this purpose.

Since we have made our position as clear as possible - and have expressed our opinions to the administrative head of this City - we have no desire to antagonize - but have a sincere wish to conciliate.

I repeat:

"In an atmosphere of calm, free, frank, open discussion - there are no problems that cannot be resolved by men of good will."

This, ladies and gentlemen - is the wish of the Commission as I, as its Chairman, understand it.

I would like to go on to the next order of business - on our agenda - but will leave the floor open - if there is a request for discussion.

STATEMENT BY:

Alexander Mark, Chairman, Newark Human Rights Commission
at its regular meeting March 19, 1963.